

Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup Meeting
Alpena Snowmobile Association Clubhouse, Herron
June 20, 2019

SAW Committee Members: Chairman Lee Murray, Barry Bethke, Don Britton, Jim Duke, Bill Manson, and PJ McCaughn

DNR Staff: John Morey, Lt. Jim Gorno, CO Jessie Curtis, Gregory Kinser, Paul Gaberdiel, Jessica Holley, Rob Katona, Scott Slavin, and Monica Weis

Public:

Ken and Donnie McCrum, Bob and Sue Eller, Gary and Kay Grove, Deb Manson, Roger Kilbury, Bill Lucas, Dave Campo, Karen Middendorp, Kari Davenport, Rose Ann and Arden Conklin, Mark Evans, Bradley Potter, Mason Misrak, Jim Kelts, Jeff Biggs, Ron Corbett, David Low, Karyn Hautamaki, Stephen Barnett, Mark Pankner, Jessie Curtis, Don and Diane Reed, Paul Anderson, Mark Hansen, and Erik Smith

Chairman Lee Murray called the meeting to order at 9:55 am.

Mr. Jim Duke made a motion to approve the February 28th meeting minutes, **Mr. Barry Bethke** seconded, motion carried.

Mr. Bill Manson made a motion to allow the Chairman to take agenda items out of order, **Mr. Don Britton** seconded, motion carried.

Mr. Britton made a motion to approve the June 20th^h agenda as amended, **Mr. Bethke** seconded, motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Trail Plan Review/Request for SAW Committee Input

Ms. Jessica Holley provided the Committee members a copy of the DNR PRD master Trail Plan requesting everyone read through and provide comments, considerations, and input.

Equipment Sub-Committee Report

Mr. Britton stated that seven new groomers and one drag could be purchased with the leftover program monies. With the second round of appropriations for the lost monies, nine groomers and five drags could be purchased totaling 16 groomers and six drags for this year.

It was brought up that tracked vehicles are being used off-season and the use is causing damages and a motion to be made to prohibit off-season use. **Mr. Don Reed** suggested defining off-season by stating the dates, between April 1st and December 1st.

Mr. Britton made a motion that tracked vehicles must have wheels if used without adequate snow. Any tracked machine that would require modification, i.e., Piston-Bully

or Tucker, will not be allowed to be used without adequate snow on the ground. Mr. Manson seconded; motion carried.

Mr. Britton talked about the \$200k appropriated to study and analyze repair issues. The contract is currently out for bid. The last study the program paid for was given to the community and not exclusively back to the program. The technology field used the results to enhance their manufacturing. We also did not receive the equipment that was suggested in the study.

Mr. Britton made a motion to ensure the results of this currently appropriated study should belong only to the program. The results of the maintenance study should not be shared with any other entity. Mr. Manson seconded; motion carried.

If the clubs are aware of any major repairs/refurbishments, send the information to Mr. Richard Kennedy. **Ms. Holley** will send an email reminder.

Several clubs are due for new units this year, including some of the following: North Country, Keweenaw, Gogebic Area, Seney, Superior, and TASA/NW and should have their paperwork and information in order. The clubs included in the second round: Iron Range, Schoolcraft, Grand Marais, Sault Ste. Marie, Gaylord, Grand Traverse, Houghton Lake, and Roscommon-Higgins Lake should get their paperwork started.

Year End Cost Analysis

Ms. Holley spoke about how critical it is for clubs to send in an accurate and complete report. **Mr. Karl Davenport** reviewed the cost analysis and found many clubs were not reporting any cost for routine maintenance and parts – oil changes, grease, light bulbs, windshields, mirrors, etc. Even items for the drag should be included. We need to document and report these costs just like we do for fuel usage. This under-reporting of costs throws off our estimates. This in turn lowers the average **Mr. Richard Kennedy** uses to figure out the reimbursements. **Mr. Britton** stressed we need to do a better job in reporting to have a more accurate cost analysis.

Chairman Murray asked how we can ensure accurate reporting, follow-up or penalty? How can we get information to the clubs, pre-season, emails from **Mr. Kennedy** or **Ms. Holley**? Clubs are responsible to read the Handbook to find out what is and what is not covered in the program.

Mr. Manson reminded everyone the Committee suggested two years ago that penalties should be applied if reports are not submitted accurately and on time. **Ms. PJ McCaughn** said we need to positively motivate the clubs as we are all volunteers. We have a potential to raise the per mile reimbursement rate if we all can correctly submit our requests. Is there a way to help make the process faster and easier? What tools can we develop to have the program run more efficiently to make it easier on the volunteers? **Chairman Murray** agrees with **Ms. McCaughn** and said if clubs are not following the Handbook, people should not be eligible. We have controls in place to help secure accurate, timely requests. A draft letter reviewing the institution of penalties will be sent by the end of July to the clubs stating this year the penalties will be imposed.

It was asked how we could better communicate with our clubs, newsletter, blog, etc. **Ms. Karen Middendorf** said articles could be posted on the MiSORVA page. It was said the best way to disseminate information is through the groomer workshop.

Off Trail Riding Sub-Committee Report

Mr. Rob Katona said the Sub-Committee is making progress. Draft posters are being developed in conjunction with the 'Ride Right' campaign message. Information will be on message boards and on the website. All the elements of the Off-Trail message will be addressed in social media postings. Short video clips with LED, staff, and riders will cover trespass, trail etiquette, and places to ride. The interactive DNR map will be linked from several places and will contain an overview and specific areas overlaid with open Forest Service roads, riding safely, and where not to ride information. There will also be a dedicated path to contact a DNR employee if there are questions.

Ms. McCaughn made a motion that the SAW Committee supports the continuation of the Off-Trail Riding Sub-Committees work on the general message to implement the campaign for this upcoming season. Mr. Britton seconded; motion carried.

Trespass Sign Update

Mr. Katona followed up on the SAW discussion from last year and the L.E.A.N Team suggestion regarding the trespass signage. SAW brought the information to the Off-Trail Riding Sub-Committee to finalize a sign. **Mr. Jim Duke** asked where the signs will be placed and who will install them. **Mr. Katona** said they will be placed on state designated trails that have consistent issues with trespassing. LED will concentrate patrols in those problem areas. Staff and clubs will install the signs.

Mr. Manson made a motion to adopt the sign and have them in place this season. Mr. Duke seconded; motion carried.

Carmeuse Update

Mr. Greg Kinser along with **Mr. Dave Campo**, **Mr. Brian Marshall** of the DEGLE, and Carmeuse representatives walked the land transaction property. Concerns were raised by the Carmeuse representatives regarding wetland impacts. Input from the DEGLE perspective is most the area had minimal impact and we can navigate around one area that has a higher impact potential. The drop off at the quarry will utilize security fencing. Two routes are tentatively approved as written and if mutually agreeable, an exchange will be offered. There is a third option, if the final route is significantly different from the first two, it would go back to the land exchange committee. Carmeuse would like a trail to the south and use what is already existing on the ground. Movement on this process has been slow but we are involved in active communications with Carmeuse and have an alternate route available into Rogers City.

It was asked if we should forgo Carmeuse and focus on the alternate snowmobile route proposed by **Mr. Campo**. **Mr. Kinser** said a trail proposal is in the works. **Mr. Campo** asked if the Carmeuse bridge is an issue, he will measure the Cheboygan River bridge for perspective.

ISC Report

MSA hosted the ISC in Grand Rapids earlier in June. **Mr. Manson** said was a well-received congress with every Canadian Province and almost all the states were represented. There were four days of seminars, discussions, and education. **Mr. Paul Anderson** gave a presentation on Off-Trail riding and the USDA Rural Development talked about the application and selection of low interest loans. Snowmobile sales are increasing in both Michigan and Canada. There were many compliments on key-note speaker **Chief Ron Olson**. Regina, Saskatchewan will host the congress next year. **Mr. Manson** thanked the Department as a major sponsor. **Mr. Kinser** thanked everyone who made this congress a success.

Appropriation/Financial Update

Mr. Manson will request and forward a written appropriation/financial update from **Mr. Paul Yauk**.

Mr. Mike Desnoyer supplied a financial statement with permit sales.

Several weeks ago, **Mr. Manson** spoke with Senator Stomas regarding the \$6.4m in leftover funds, asking if the appropriation could be pushed through without the rest of the appropriations so we would be able to have time to spend the non-capital outlay funds. The money is there, we just need the authorization. There was no action on the appropriation before the Senate went on summer break.

Trail Proposal Process Requesting a Monthly Update to Applicants

It was brought up that the DNR consistently does not update the clubs on the status of submitted trail proposals. It was asked if the clubs could get a few sentences about the status of the proposal, i.e., waiting for final approval, requesting more information, call back from private owner, etc. **Chairman Murray** asked how this would be accomplished?

***Mr. Britton** made a motion that the SAW Committee makes a recommendation to the Department that the UP and NLP Trail Coordinators send the clubs a monthly status report/update on all active trail proposal requests. **Mr. Bethke** seconded; motion carried.*

Mr. Manson will follow-up on the past suggestion from **Mr. Steve DeBrabander** on moving proposals that have been idle a length for a length of time are deferred and moved forward in the approval process. **Mr. Kinser** suggests and encourages clubs call their local contact for updates. **Ms. Holley** will put this whole discussion as an agenda item for the October meeting.

Grants: Late Paperwork and Penalty Enforcement in 2020

Penalty information was included in the 2019 Handbook to inform clubs that penalties will be instituted in the 2020 season. This is to address the on-going issues with paperwork submitted after the deadlines.

Permit Sales Report as of June 1, 2019

It is estimated that 138k permits were sold, down by ~3.6k from last year. MSA will settle in July with about 49k permits sold.

SAW Equipment Inspection Proposal Discussion: Next Steps

From the L.E.A.N. team meetings, we need to build a program to inspect equipment in the field to have a second set of eyes reviewing what was reported on the year end statements and to help make better decisions on new equipment requests. SAW recommends the Equipment Subcommittee work with **Mr. Kennedy** in continuing this discussion to move forward and implement on the ground equipment inspections. **Ms. Holley** will put on this on the October meeting agenda for an update.

2020 February/March SAW Meeting Location Considerations

At the last March Saw meeting logistics were discussed about having the SAW meeting, MSA event, and groomer workshop at different locations were discussed. Having all combined to one location would make it logistically and financially feasible and the SAW meeting would be more accessible for people to attend.

***Mr. Manson** made a motion to hold the March 5, 2020 SAW meeting at the Kewadin Casino the day before the groomer workshop. **Mr. Britton** seconded; motion carried.*

Bear Creek Swamp Irons

An old abandoned railroad grade on National Forest land near Irons is sinking in a swamp. The Forest Service wanted to close the trail to replace the bridge and address the high-water area. Clubs, counties, and sponsors came up with an alternative route. Some of the trail would be along both plowed and an unmaintained county road. The NEPA study is completed, wetland mitigation permits are in place, the project is engineered, the county road commission will help with the project, all we need is \$180k in funding. With this project, there is no need for the re-route, re-sizing of culverts, or Trail 614 wetland mitigation. Out of the \$6.4m in leftover funding appropriations, can we have \$180k for this project as we have agreements in place for 3,000 feet of trail with the Forest Service and county?

***Mr. Manson** made a motion for the Bear Creek Swamp Irons project to move forward with funding this trail due to paramount safety issues to be completed. If not in this fiscal year, it is to be placed on the books after October 1st. **Mr. Britton** seconded; motion carried.*

Mackinac Island Trail Permits

It was brought up that there is some misinformation regarding trail permit requirements on Mackinac Island. A recent article in the local paper states 'Winter was good for island businesses thanks to visiting snowmobilers.' Cpl. John Morey said Mackinaw Island's local unit of government established an ordinance requiring snowmobiles operating on the island pay a local fee to obtain a Mackinaw Island Snowmobile Permit.

A SAW member indicated they sold a total of 3,339 day passes and 447 other local permits sold this past season. Some island residents appear to have the mindset that they do not need the annual DNR Snowmobile Trail Permit and would like to be exempt from that state law requirement. Their mindset is contrary to state law requiring all snowmobiles operating in an area open to the general public to display a valid DNR Snowmobile Trail permit. Conservation Officers continue with normal patrols resulting in warnings and also citations for snowmobiles not displaying the annual DNR Snowmobile Trail permit. The Mackinac County Prosecutor's Office wants compliance and indicated their office would dismiss DNR Trail permit citations if the person would go out and purchase a DNR permit after the fact. DNR Law Enforcement Division personnel meet with the prosecutor and agreed that they would not take enforcement action if the snowmobile was within the downtown business proper of the island however, if outside of the downtown area, appropriate enforcement action will be taken. Workgroup members indicated the entire island is a state park except for the leases, private land, and the unit of government boundary. The island is not groomed, only the perimeter is plowed for emergency access.

NEW BUSINESS

MiSORVA Update

MSA was asked by the DNR to work with ORVA as many of the clubs in the UP are both 'snow and dirt.' **Mr. Manson** said this past December, snow and dirt joined together under MiSORVA thereby creating representation of these two groups as a unified front to the DNR and Lansing. The creation of MiSORVA will help in both positive and negative legislation. A Sub-Committee was created to work on the logistics and recommend new bylaws for adoption. All the papers with the state and federal governments have been filed on May 18th. The board will comprise of 81 members representing nine districts with nine delegates each representing a blend of snowmobile, dirt, and dual clubs. There will be no co-mingling of funds. Any changes to the ORV laws will go through the ORVA board.

Equipment Warranty Issue

In the past, **Mr. Bethke** said, there was an agreement in place if a piece of equipment was down for repairs more than a day a replacement was supplied by the dealer. Then the clubs started purchasing extended warranties but discontinued that process because it was too costly to the program. Maybe we can speak with the manufacturer or dealer to ensure we receive a replacement machine while repairs are being done. It was noted the best time for the grant sponsor to talk with a dealer is at the time of purchase.

The Equipment Sub-Committee would like to continue to have floaters available as a back-ups for instances when machines will be down for repairs. This year we used the same spare in three different areas. If this is the course we decide to pursue, the spare would need to be refurbished.

DNR Staff Reports

Cpl. Morey

Gave an update to the 2018 LED Annual Report.

Mr. Kinser

The Trails Section Secretary position will soon be filled. There is a lot of hard work accomplished on the 'Ride Right' campaign and it is bleeding over to the ORV side of things. The status of the Swan River Bridge re-decking and re-railing project, DNR identified funds to look at the bridge for engineering. The trail in Waters from the county line north to Fairview will be paved, no asphalt is planned inside the city of Gaylord. Unsure of the top surface most likely an aggregate.

Mr. Scott Slavin

Kaleva/CSX purchase is the first purchase made with the requirement to cap the grade with 12-14 inches of material, it has been a challenge. White Pine Trail 5 has large washouts and significant culvert issues in the southern area. 29 miles of the trail will be paved and should be opened by this fall. The office has received calls asking why the snowmobile trail will be closed, it is not going to be closed. The Forest Service is now managing the Wellston's club re-decking project. We are also working on a re-route due to lost trail on private land. Due to railroad requirements, poles are part of a project that is located close to the railroad. We are speaking with the Gaylord club regarding issues on US 27 and downtown.

Mr. Paul Gaberdiel

We are working on eight bridges: waiting on a supplemental for \$300k on the Doty Bridge, Sunken Lake Bridge is in progress, Trail 8 – engineers are reviewing and hopefully one of the three will be complete this year. Ashmun Bay is being resurfaced on the grade. On Drummond Island we are making bypasses around large holes. We are waiting on funding to put in a \$300k bridge to move the trail off H58 near Miner's Castle. Haywire Grade from Shingleton to Manistique will be showcased during the Rails-to-Trails 50 Years Celebration with an event planned for each of the four user groups: snowmobile, ORV, equestrian, and biking. An ORV Seasonal Restriction Committee has been created to make recommendations at the September ORVA meeting.

Mr. Katona

The trail rebuild in Houghton County is continuing, no new trail will be closed. We are working with the Forest Service on a washout on Trail 109 near Silver Mountain, a connector to the Bill Nicholls Trail. The Sturgeon River Slough bridge on Trail 15 Baraga – Chassell has washed away, might not be open for this season. Logging is scheduled at Craig Lake State Park this winter. The current bridge is washout and we are looking into a re-route. The underpass on US 41 will be open this season. Work is being done to secure easements on the north side and to construct new trail. Thanks to the members of the Off-Trail Riding Sub-Committee for their efforts.

Lt. Jim Gorno

LED for District 3 which includes the top eight counties in the Northern Lower Peninsula. This year District 3 is fully staffed with 20 officers equipped and trained for enforcing laws. Excessive noise enforcement is becoming a statewide practice. Each Area of the District has decibel testing equipment and we are stepping up patrols. **Lt. Gorno** is impressed with the professionalism of this meeting and the Workgroup efforts. Contact **Lt. Gorno** with an enforcement issues or questions.

Ms. Holley

Thank you to the Alpena Snowmobile Club for hosting our meeting. The informational bags from the city and chamber of commerce shows great cooperation between the club and community.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Jim Kelts

Mr. Kelts thanked the DNR for being at the meeting as well as being proactive with our issues. With regards to the Carmeuse project, drop the issue and work on Mr. Campo's alternate plan. There has been little progress through all the years since work first started on Carmeuse. It is also not acceptable for Trail Proposals to sit on someone's desk for weeks. The Cheboygan bridge has had a temporary bridge for three years, what is being done for a permanent bridge?

Ms. Karyn Hautamaki

Ms. Hautamaki reminded the SAW that last year the Committee made a recommendation to the DNR to send two representatives from each sponsor to the groomer workshop. The groomer workshop is very important for communication and stress the importance of having paperwork submitted on time. The best time to have everyone available at the same time is the Workshop. **Mr. Davenport** agreed saying the Roundtable discussion by the Equipment Sub-Committee at the workshop was well received. This is the platform to discuss the 'positive reinforcement' as opposed to penalties brought up earlier by **Ms. McCaughn**.

Mr. Manson made a motion to recommend the DNR send two representatives from each grooming entity to the groomer workshop and their registration be paid. Mr. Britton seconded; motion carried.

What is the status of the Free Snowmobiling Weekend? **Mr. Manson** is in communication with **Ms. Nicole Toman**. **Ms. Toman** sent the snowmobile law to **Mr. Manson** stating that there is an issue with the trail permits and free riding is not allowed. **Mr. Manson** and **Ms. Holley** will work with **Ms. Toman** on getting specific details of the language in the law.

***Mr. Manson** made a motion to revisit the previous request from the SAW to the DNR regrading a Free Snowmobile Weekend suggested by MiSORVA. Also, to have the DNR provide the details in the law and provide the SAW specifically what needs to*

*occur to move this issue forward. If there needs to be a legislative change, provide specifics. **Mr. Britton** seconded; motion carried.*

Mr. Don Reed

Mr. Reed said the groomer workshop is the best place for grant sponsors and the DNR to come together to work on our biggest issues, maintenance and the cost of equipment. If we can have manufacturers provide education and demonstrations to us, that would be very beneficial and save money, as in the case of checking the wear pins and how to maintain them.

Mr. Mark Pankner

Mr. Mark Pankner thanked the DNR for coming to the SAW meeting and listening to the concerns and giving updates. He was disappointed that people on the agenda from the DNR were not present at the head table, leaving other staff answering questions.

Chairman Murray said the point is well taken; however, we do not know the circumstances why people are not present.

Mr. Davenport

Mr. Davenport pointed out that the clubs need 'NO ORV' signs and we need to post private property. We were told we do not post private property, yet the sign says private property. If we are not able to use the 'NO ORV' signs for trespass issues on private property, the next sign we will be using are the 'TRAIL CLOSED' signs. We have discussed this issue up to our local DNR contact and were told we do not post private property.

***Mr. Manson** made a motion that the SAW makes a recommendation to the DNR to create a policy change to allow placing the 'NO ORV' or 'Private Property' signs where their trails intersect or connect with private property. **Ms. McCaughn** seconded; motion carried*

Mr. Dave Campo

Who and how will we police the no tracked vehicle use out of season? Will there be any penalties? It was discussed and brought up those issues will be the next phase the Equipment Sub- Committee will be addressing.

Mr. Bob Eller

Mr. Eller thanked everyone for coming to the Alpena meeting. Would like to address the issue in the Handbook stating that the insurance policy will not be issued until everyone has their paperwork in. We need to ensure by whatever means to get the clubs to submit their paperwork for us to acquire and request reimbursement for our insurance. Volunteers are penalized, maybe some type of penalty against the DNR could be instituted when they don't hold up their end of the bargain.

The DNR needs to communicate with the clubs when there is active logging occurring near the snowmobile trail as there are issues with stumps along the trail edge, road repairs for rutting, and damages to the culverts that the clubs installed, we end up paying the repair costs for logging jobs.

Mr. Eller said that equipment costs are out of hand, grant sponsors are bankrupting the program by purchasing expensive equipment. We need to look at what we need and buy accordingly, not necessarily the most high-end piece of equipment, something that will get the job done. We should be encouraged to work with our local equipment dealers.

Mr. Bill Lucas

Thanked everyone and said it was nice to be back with his snowmobile ‘family.’ We are building bridges and have come a long way since the old days of groomers on bedsprings with logs on top dragged behind snowmobiles. No matter what our obstacles are, we must be pleased with our efforts. **Mr. Lucas** explained he was sorry for his sudden departure from the Committee as he has family issues that need attending. He was glad to be back and enjoyed the meeting and visiting with everyone.

ROUNDTABLE

Mr. Britton thanked the Equipment Sub-Committee for the work they continue to accomplish. **Chairman Murray** concurs and appreciates their efforts.

Mr. Manson shared the following trails and miles of snowmobile overlap:

ORV Route miles	1,291	Overlap miles	981
ATV miles	1,303	“	“ 185
Motorcycle miles	1,676	“	“ 64
MCCT miles	665	“	“

There is over 1,200 miles of other trails that overlap with the snowmobile trail.

Chairman Murray asked the group if anyone had suggestions for assisting the Chandler Hills area Challenge Mountain event that teaches handicapped children how to ski. They use snowmobiles to take some of the children to the top of the mountain. Some of the ideas from the group were contact manufacturers, solicit ideas on social media, contact MiSORVA to post information, donate our time or equipment to help. If anyone has ideas for a grant, donation, or other assistance, contact **Chairman Murray**.

Ms. McCaughn is happy to be on board and working with the SAW committee.

The next SAW meeting will be on Friday October 18th in Gaylord, venue to be determined.

Mr. Bethke made a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Mr. Duke** seconded; meeting adjourned at 2:20.